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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an inservice teacher education project entitled "Educating the Low Achieving Child in the Regular Classroom" offered to Christian-oriented nonpublic urban schools that are committed to mainstreaming children with learning differences. The project provided training to increase teachers' flexibility and ability to tolerate the diverse needs of low achieving students. Participants (N=27) completed a Teacher Attitude Inventory (TAI) and the Adult Self-Perception Profile (ASPP). Workshop results indicated that the predominantly female sample (23 females) had lower than expected perceptions of their job competence, intelligence, and ability to be adequate providers; and favored a more "traditional" teaching style, which values a high degree of control, group learning through lecture and reading, and the teacher as an authority figure. The 4-sessiom consultation project was insufficient to impact successfully on ingrained attitudes; training and strategizing about student needs should be an ongoing process in the form of support teams that meet regularly to impact upon "traditonal" instructors who will need support and encouragement to alter their method of teaching. An appendix provides a letter offering the program to principals, program objectives and syllabus, and workshop session handouts and activity worksheets. (LL)

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A Teacher Consultation Project For Urban Non-Public Schools

Paper to be presented at the

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Abstract

This teacher consultation project found the predominantly female sample (females = 23, males = 4) of non public school teachers to have lower than expected perceptions of job competence, intelligence and ability to be adequate providers. These teachers also favored a more "traditional" teaching style, which valued a high degree of control, group learning through lecture and reading and the teacher as an authority figure.

The four (4) session consultation project initiated by these authors was felt to be insufficient to impact successfully on what appeared to be rather ingrained attitudes. Rather, training and strategizing about student needs should be an ongoing process and in the form of support teams that meet regularly.

While not mandated by law for non-public schools, these support teams seem necessary to impact upon "traditional" instructors who will need support and encouragement to alter their method of teaching.

This teacher consultation project was developed by two counseling/psychology supervisors at READS, Inc. READS, Inc. is a nonprofit agency that has provided remedial education, diagnostic, counseling, and psychological services to more than forty nonpublic schools and over 200,000 individuals in north and south Philadelphia. These services are legislated by law (Pennsylvania Act 89) and monies are disbursed through the state educational intermediate unit. The schools that receive READS services are mainly Christian in orientation. Presently the nonpublic schools have shown a commitment to educate children with learning differences within the context of regular education. Simultaneously, the new Pennsylvania special education regulations set forth standards that seemed to be largely in support of regular education initiatives to aid handicapped students as much as possible. These two factors have contributed to the time lines of this consultation project.

Hannah (1988) demonstrated that mainstreaming was most successful when teacher attitude was positive. Predictors of positive attitude were correlated with being educated about specific handicaps, having self-confidence and working with children in the lower elementary grades. (Morris & McCauley, 1977, Larrivee & Cook, 1979; Horne, 1983; & Braun, 1980). The

success of mainstreaming was also attributed to the variables of small classroom size, the addition of support personnel within the classroom, and teacher training.

The effort of these supervisors was directed toward teacher training through a behavior and skill based consultative model. This program was to serve as a pilot program to be implemented by our staff and counselors for the following academic year.

The original plan for this research was to include pre and post testing of teachers on attitude and self-esteem to determine whether training over a four month period did make a difference in teacher attitudes and self-esteem. While teachers were pretested, post testing was unable to be accomplished. Post testing was abandoned because there was considerable variation between faculties as to number of consultation sessions attempted. Also, cancelled sessions caused both large and small groupings of teachers to be necessary and enough other variations were present that any type pre-post comparisons were seen as invalid.

This paper describes in detail the development of this project, the measures utilized in the pretesting, a description of the teachers in the project, samples of material used in training, and recommendations for further training of teachers.

Method

In the late summer of 1991 a letter was sent to all of the schools that READS serviced inviting the principal and their staffs to participate in a program entitled "Educating the low achieving child in the classroom." While our focus was the elementary school, these letters were also sent to the secondary schools that we serviced. A copy of this letter is included in the Appendix. By October 1, fifteen schools had made inquiry into this project. Thirteen of these schools were elementary and two were secondary schools. Five elementary schools committed to the four part program. In addition, one elementary school went with a two part in-service, while the two secondary schools decided upon a one session workshop. Three of the schools that selected the four part series were started in October 1991.

In-service training was scheduled either after school, during faculty meeting times (children had early dismissal), or during school time using classroom or parent aides for the time of the training sessions. Four of the five participating schools were Catholic. The fifth school, an independent, non-sectarian school, with a "progressive" educational philosophy, decided after the first session to terminate the consultation services as they felt they were able to address the

needs of all their students without outside consultation. The remaining two schools who had enrolled in the series were started in January. Scheduling was a major obstacle to the success of this program. Only one of the four schools that enrolled in this series was to complete the four part series. Emergencies and school business were reasons for cancellations. The three remaining schools in the project completed three out four in-service training sessions.

There were twenty-seven teachers who participated in this project. Four teachers were male and twenty-three were female. Their level of experience ranged from first year to more than twenty years teaching. Specifically there was one first year teacher, nine teachers who had between one and three years experience, five having a range of experience between four and ten years, and the remaining twelve teachers had over ten years experience. The educational level of the teachers was also gathered. Two teachers had associate's degrees, fifteen had bachelor's degrees, one had a bachelor's plus fifteen, and nine had master's degrees.

Materials

To measure teacher attitudes, a Teacher Attitude Inventory by Joanne Rand Whitmore (TAI) (Whitmore, 1985) was administered

either at the first session or prior to the first training session. This inventory was developed on the theoretical premise that there are two basic and dichotomous teaching styles--traditional versus experimental. The traditional teacher is one depicted as one who emphasizes control of student behavior, a teacher centered style wherein the teacher is perceived as the expert/authority, a structured and consistent program with mastery of content the main objective for success.

In addition, traditional teachers desire independence from other faculty members and prefer to work without teams. The experimental teacher focuses on motivating students, centers on the process of learning as opposed to content, demonstrates flexibility in programming, caters to individuals, and sees his/her role as a facilitator of learning.

The TAI presents twenty four pairs of dichotomous statements counter balanced on either side of the page for the teacher to evaluate on a one to five Likert scale. A score of eighty-five or over indicates a willingness to participate in teacher training. A score of one hundred or more indicates those who are most flexible, while scores under eighty-five demonstrate those most likely to be resistant to innovation. The TAI was designed as an informal measure. No normative data has been collected. Validity and reliability information do not exist.

In addition to the TAI, the Adult Self-Perception Profile (ASPP) (Messer & Harter 1986) was administered to the teachers participating in the project. The "What I am Like" inventory taps ten different areas of competency in a fifty item inventory. In addition, global self worth is another dimension of this scale. The inventory presents two sets of statements for each item and allows the individual to identify with either a competent or inadequate group. After identification the individual determines whether this identification is either weak or strong. Scoring is on a one to four basis with high scores suggesting a high self concept. The eleven scales are as follows: sociability, job competence, nurturance, athletic competence, physical appearance, adequate provider, morality, household management, intimate relationships, intelligence, sense of humor, and global self-worth.

Procedure

The four session training is briefly described. Included in the appendix of this paper are all handouts used in this teacher training series. Our objectives were: 1) to define the characteristics of the low achieving student to promote better understanding and realistic expectations for these students, 2) to understand what teaching strategies would be appropriate and

beneficial for low achieving students, 3) to integrate teaching techniques for a low achieving student within a regular classroom.

These objectives were to be accomplished by four, one hour in-service training sessions led by these authors who have been trained as school psychologists and serve as supervisors to the READS counseling and psychology staff. Both trainers have over ten years experience in the field of school psychology. Faculties were divided into two groups. One group was comprised of individuals teaching kindergarten through fourth grade. The second group was made up of teachers from the fifth to eighth grade.

The first session focused on defining the low achieving child and teacher attitudes toward these students. Teachers were given a true/false "quiz" based on educational research about low achievers and sound educational practices. This "quiz" served as a springboard for discussion. At the second session "mini" case histories were distributed to the teachers. The histories characterized a slow learner, a mildly learning disabled student with visual strengths, and a mildly learning disabled student with auditory strengths. A list of instructional strategies was attached and teachers were asked to determine which strategies would be appropriate for each type of student.

Session 3 focused on adaptation of curriculum and tests for low achievers. At session 2 texts and teacher made tests were collected for the facilitators to review. Discussion centered around ways to improve teacher tests and to change curriculum to meet the needs of low achievers. Session 4 was devoted to specific case study of students in their class and general discussion.

Results

Since there was no pre-post measure as originally planned, the information received was basically descriptive of the sample. For the ASPP, subscale competence scores in all areas were compared with normative scores of working women for the female participants in the project, as there were only four males in the sample. A t-test for sample means was employed. On the scales of job competence, provider, and intelligence our teacher self-rating scores were significantly lower than the normative population. (Job Competence--$T=9.33$, $p<.001$; Provider--$T=31.00$, $p<.001$; Intelligence--$T=-3.00$, $p<.01$). There were other areas in which our sample's perceived competence was significantly lower than the normative population, however, these were the three most job related.

On the nurturance scale the teacher sample scored higher than the normed group, but the score was not significant.

As the TAI was developed as an inventory, there were no norms available. The mean score of our teachers was eighty-five which suggested that they were "traditional" in their teaching style.

A number of correlations were run. There was no relationship between teacher experience and global self-worth, educational level and global self-worth, educational level and job competence, experience and job competence, educational level and full scale TAI score. In addition, there were no relationships between full scale TAI scores and global self-worth, or perceived intellectual competence. These findings were congruent with prior research, which states that educational level and experience do not seem to relate to teachers' perceived effectiveness (Squires, Huitt, and Segars, 1983).

Discussion

This project was an attempt to provide teacher training to increase teachers' flexibility and their ability to tolerate the many diverse needs of low achieving students.

Our original research design of pre and post testing teachers with a teacher attitude inventory and self-esteem measure was abandoned because the program in its' entirety was only able to be carried out in one school.

In addition, these supervisors felt that a one hour training session a month, over a three or four month period, would be too little intervention to make a significant difference in teacher attitudes.

The data gathered was descriptive of the sample and is helpful in future planning of teacher training.

A profile of our teacher sample emerged from the data. While their overall self-esteem appeared to be comparable to other working females, their perceptions of their job competence, their perceptions of their ability to be adequate providers, and their perceived intelligence was significantly lower than the normative group of full-time working women. It would seem that their perceptions in the provider area were strongly grounded in reality, as inadequate compensation has always been problematic for private, nonpublic school teachers.

It would seem that in order to rectify the lack of self-esteem in the areas of job competence and intelligence, and to increase teacher flexibility in handling students with diverse abilities and learning styles, teacher training and a forum for inter-teacher communication would certainly be of value. To have a positive impact it would seem that training and strategizing about student needs should be ongoing.

In lieu of didactic sessions, the implementation of small group consultation with teachers by a trained learning consultant/facilitator might be a venue for serving the professional needs of these teachers.

Also with regard to teacher attitudes, this teacher sample demonstrated that their orientation to teaching was "traditional", i.e., that they generally favored a high degree of control of student behavior, group learning through lecture, and reading, with the teacher as the authority. This may present some problems when attempting to accommodate children with learning differences. Ongoing consultation may help with these teachers' efforts to modify instructional strategies as they are "traditional" instructors who will need support and encouragement to alter their method of teaching.

While there is considerable literature available on teacher attitudes, there is a paucity of research which focuses on the attitudes if urban, nonpublic school teachers. As less students are peing placed from nonpublic schools to public schools, more research should be conducted as to the effectiveness of these nonpublic regular education initiatives and their effects on faculty attitudes.

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Appendix

Contents

1. Letter to Principals 1

2. Program objectives and syllabus 2

3. Session I Handout/Activity 3

4. Session II Handout/Activity 4

5. Session III Handout 5

READS, Inc. 500 North Sixth Street Philadelphia, PA 19123 215 592-7000

August 19, 1991

Dear Principal:

READS Counseling and Psychology Coordinators are pleased to offer a series of consultations to your faculty on the topic of "Educating the Low Achieving Child within the Classroom." The format would be small groups to enable us to address the specific needs of primary and intermediate grade separately. Dates and times would be at your faculty's convenience. As we have obvious time constraints, this service would be offered on a first-come, first serve basis. If you are interested, please give us a call at 592-7000. We will be establishing a consultation schedule beginning Oct. 1.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia B. Segal
Coordinator of Counseling Services

Joseph E. Lavoritano
Counselor of Psychological Services

PBS/jb

READS, Inc. 500 North Sixth Street Philadelphia, PA 19123 215 592-7000

Educating The Low Achieving Child In The Regular Classroom

In a four session series to elementary teaching faculties we hope to achieve the following objectives:

A. To define the characteristics of the low achieving child thereby providing teachers with a better understanding of the low achieving student.

B. To understand what teaching strategies are appropriate and beneficial for low achieving students.

C. To integrate teaching techniques for a low achieving student within the regular classroom.

General topical outline

Session I
- Defining The Low Achieving Child
- Organizing and Managing Instruction

Session II
- Organizing and Managing Instruction
- General Instructional Strategies for the low achieving child

Session III
- Instructional Strategies
- Adapting Curriculum and Tests for Low Achievers

Session IV
- Specific case discussion and instructional planning for the learning handicapped

These programs are part of a research project. We are asking all participants to fill out two self-report measures - one on teacher attitude, the other on self-esteem. These inventories should take about twenty minutes in total to fill out. Teachers will be asked to complete these on their own time after the first session, and once again after session four. Thank you for your cooperation.

Patricia B. Segal
Coordinator of Counseling Services

Joseph E. Lavoritano
Counselor of Psychological Services

PBS/jb

QUIZ

1. T F Low achievers are more apt to receive individual help from the teacher than high achievers.

2. T F If a child is having difficulty responding to a question, the teacher will usually allow the student more time to respond if the student is a low achiever than she or he would if the child were a high achiever.

3. T F Teachers are more apt to indicate to a low achiever than to a high achiever whether her or his response to a question is right or wrong.

4. T F The amount of teacher praise for classroom activities is not strongly related to achievement unless it entails an accurate assessment of student responses.

5. T F In interaction with low achievers, teachers are more apt to say things which express a personal interest in the child's out of school life than they are in interaction with high achievers.

6. T F If children do not have assigned seats and a classroom has a front and back, high achievers are more apt to be in the back of the room.

7. T F In an average 4th grade class there is approximately a two year spread in achievement scores of children in both high and low groups respectively! An average 4th grade glass has approximately a 5 grade level spread between the lowest and highest children.

8. T F This spread in achievement decreases with age.

9. T F The single best approach to organizing instruction is an individualized approach.

10. T F Individualized instruction has as a necessity the requirement that students be self directed. If a student is not self-directed, a teacher aide, resource person or volunteer is needed. Therefore, it is a more practical approach with average to above average students.

11. T F Method of instruction is more important than "time on task" for predicting how much of a particular curriculum will be mastered.

12. T F The best Method for asking for students to answer is to have them volunteer by raising their hands.

13. T F By mid-first grade, and certainly by second grade all children are at Piaget's concrete operational level of cognitive development and visual and tactile classroom tools, such as, counting sticks, visual examples of grammar and punctuation rules and pictorial time charts can be removed.

14. T F In fact, the above mentioned visual and tactile tools should be removed, as they foster dependence. Removing concrete examples is especially important in the intermediate grades (middle school grades) where students are making the transition from concrete to formal operations.

15. T F Large group instruction is suitable for average or above average students, but is not appropriate for special needs students.

16. T F Due to the low self-esteem associated with students in low reading groups, ability grouping for is not a valid instructional method for reading.

17. T F Low achieving students tend to talk more at unsanctioned times than high achieving students.

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Directions: Below are three brief case studies. Take 10 minutes to assign specific strategies to each case. Instructional strategies can be assigned to more than one case.

Jane is a second grade with an I.Q. in the 80-89 range who is experiencing difficulty keeping pace with her classmates. She is approximately a year below grade level and seems to need considerable repetition to achieve mastery. Retention in second grade is being considered for next year.

Billy is a fifth grader who has average ability, but his achievement lags behind his classmates. He shows some mild deficits in visual-motor perception, has poor handwriting, and has difficulty staying on task and organizing himself to start or finish a task.

John is a third grader who seems to learn better when he can "see it," but has a hard time remembering oral directions. John has an adequate sight vocabulary. He has difficulty mastering phonics and his overall reading level is approximately one year below grade level.

Directions: Below are three brief case studies. Take 10 minutes to assign specific strategies to each case. Instructional strategies can be assigned to more than one case.

Ray is seventh grader with an I.Q. in the low average range who is experiencing difficulty keeping pace with his classmates. His reading and math skills are approximately on a fourth grade level. Retention is being considered for next year.

Billy is a fifth grader who has average ability, but his achievement lags behind his classmates. He shows some mild deficits in visual-motor perception, has poor handwriting, and has difficulty staying on task and organizing himself to start or finish a task.

Denise is an eighth grade girl who seems to learn better when she "sees" new material. Her teacher reports that Denise can not follow oral directions Denise has had difficulty with reading (reading at a fifth grade level), but her math skills, particularly in arithmetic computation are strong.

Instructional Strategies Bank

1. Repeat, repeat, repeat to ensure overlearning.
2. Use concrete examples and plain language.
3. Slow the pace of instruction.
4. Do not begin a new assignment or project until the old one is mastered.
5. Demonstrate. Then let the student practice.
6. Seat him in the front of the class near the center of the blackboard.
7. Place limited amounts of material on ditto sheets, chalkboard, or overhead projector.
8. Supply graph paper (or lined paper turned sideways) to make columns for math problems.
9. Encourage your student to recite material he's memorizing.
10. Have him use a finger, pencil or index card to mark his place when reading.
11. Avoid giving homework assignments verbally, instead, use the chalkboard, overhead projector, or ditto sheets.
12. Present verbal directions one step at a time, for directions with many steps, show the child what to do.
13. Provide pictorial aids such as visual outlines, graphics organizers, story maps, graphs, charts, diagrams use a variety of visual learning materials, such as filmstrips and pictorial computer programs.
14. Have the student repeat your questions before he answers; allow him extra time (perhaps 15 sec.) to compose an answer.
15. Give short, frequent tests that are double spaced and , if possible have large type.
16. Give unmistakable cues to identify important information: "This is important."
17. Provide a sequential list of tasks when giving him and independent assignment.
18. Ask your student for periodic status reports on long-term assignments such as book reports.
19. List materials he'll need for the next class when you're assigning homework.
20. Tape record the student's reading assignment. Ask questions. Have the student answer orally back into the tape recorder.

Adapting Curriculum for the Low Achieving Child in Science and Social Studies

STRATEGIES

1.) Teacher has read the text and extracted the main ideas, vocabulary, and concepts for the students.

2.) Presents preview/overview/objectives and gets students to relate to material from their own experience.

Teacher asks general questions to get students to discuss their own experiences. For example, transportation unit-teacher might ask:

What are the different ways you/your family might go the supermarket? To go to a friend's? To go to Dorney Park? To go to California?

3.) Introduces vocabulary.

A.) Pre-printed sheet with simple definitions (page vocabulary word appears in text).
B.) Pre-printed sheet without definitions that class does together or in small groups using bright, middle and low achieving students.
C.) Gets students to either tape or write definition in their own words.
D.) Use 3X5 cards and index file box for new vocabulary for each student. Students can quiz each other on vocabulary.

4.) Color code text.

A.) Use one color to underline vocabulary and definition.
B.) Use another color to underline facts.

5.) Substitute materials.
Use alternatives to text book, if, for example, you are studying the brain, look for materials that have a lower readability index and substitute.

6.) Have brighter students pre-read material. Ask them to write a summary using easier vocabulary, yet emphasizing the same content and concepts. Give to students who are having difficulty.

7.) For reading assignments, list questions and then the page where correct answers can be found.

8.) Tape record specific segments of the reading assignment. Intersperse questions. Give the correct response to questions on the tape.

9.) To test comprehension, give assignments that do not utilize just reading and writing. Have the students illustrate a concept or tape record what they thought were the important points. For cause and effect - illustrations in the form of a comic book format are effective. The use of small skits or dramatization is often helpful.